Indian workers in Gulf countries

1825. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indians that have been recruited through agencies to work in gulf countries and are denied protection of labour laws and plunged into violation of migration rules;

(b) the number of Indian migrants in the jails of Gulf countries including Oman's Sohar jail and the steps taken for their release as on today, category-wise;

(c) the details of such recruitment agencies/racket related violations and the action taken against them for the last three year, year-wise, category-wise; and

(d) whether there is any proposal to chalk out a comprehensive policy on migration for the benefit of Indians working in Gulf countries?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(d) There is not such proposal at present.

MoU with AAPI

1826. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) have been signed with the American Association of Physician of Indian Origin (AAPI) to improve the primary health sector in the country; and

(b) if so, the details of the MoU and by when it is expected to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) Yes. The objective of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which came into effect from 7th January, 2006, is to promote, establish and operate primary health care projects in selected States of India. The knowledge, skills and resources of American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) will be harnessed to

help improve primary health care in India starting with pilot projects in two or more States. Funds will be provided by the Government of India, State Governments concerned and AAPI. The MoU will be implemented in a time bound manner.

Voting Rights to NRIs and PIOs

1827. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are contemplating to allow NRIs and PIOs to enroll themselves in electoral rolls and exercise voting right in various elections in India, including Parliamentary and Assembly elections, and

(b) if so, the details in this regard, with details of the criteria laid down for such enrolment and the number of NRIs and PIOs from different countries likely to avail this privilege, country-wise?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) Yes. A Proposal for giving voting rights to Indian citizens only (not PIOs) who are away from their place of residence on account of employment, education or otherwise has been approved by the Government. A Bill in this regard has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 28th February, 2006.

Development of Panchayati Raj Institutions

1828. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether any new method have been proposed in the last five years to further develop Panchayati Raj Institution;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Prior to the setting up of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Ministry of Rural Development was the nodal Ministry for Panchayati Raj Institutions. A Conference of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj was held on 11th July 2001 at New Delhi to discuss the measures to be taken to devolve functions and powers in accordance with the provisions of the